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ABSTRACT

Shrinking resources were a primary reason for the development of systematic program evaluation at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, beginning in 1971. The first three programs in the evaluation cycle were also scheduled for accreditation visits by their respective professional associations. Although the three programs are generally considered to be among the very best in the country, the evaluation teams' reports questioned the quality of and necessity for them, since there was little emphasis placed on research. This experience illustrated the continuing debate over research efforts versus high quality professional training in the university, and the possibility of conflict between program accomplishments and institutional goals. If the experience at the University of Illinois is not atypical, it may be the case that many universities are losing high quality programs because the programs do not reflect the institution's research priorities. University-level professional preparation programs may devolve to institutions with less background and commitment to research, such as the former normal school. In the last analysis, the role of major research universities in preparing people for professions like teaching and librarianship will be determined by the level of intellectual emphasis desired in these professions by those who control entry. (Author/MSE)

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# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INSTITUTIONAL SELF EVALUATION AND NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL ACCREDITATION

or

## Back To The Normal School?

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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Voluntary professional accreditation has been a feature of the university landscape for decades. Systematic and formal institutional self-evaluation is relatively new. Each of these forms of assessment was created for different purposes. Each serves somewhat different audiences. The purpose of this paper is to describe some of the procedures associated with institutional self-evaluation; to indicate that the two methods of assessment produce different results, at least at one university; and to advance the proposition that the two activities are likely to produce even more markedly conflicting evaluations in the future.* The differences in outcome flow less from the particular procedures that are employed in accreditation and in institutional self-evaluation than from the fact that different people are asked to make judgments in each of these forms of assessment, and, increasingly, the differing perspectives reveal clearly opposing values. Finally, the conflict in values highlights some basic questions about the future of the education professions.

My colleagues on the panel have outlined something of the history of voluntary professional accreditation and some of the current problems. I shall not attempt to cover the ground. Suffice it for my purposes now to remind you that accreditation of professional programs (as well as state-mandated "program approval") is directed -- as far as the public is concerned -- toward assuring that certain minimal standards are maintained in a university program. Its purpose is to attest to the fact that a graduate of the approved or accredited institution has completed a preparation program appropriately sanctioned by a knowledgeable group from within that professional field. However, the type of

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*Perhaps it is necessary to stipulate that the subject of this paper is not the "institutional self-study" that often is undertaken prior to an accreditation visit. Rather the focus is upon systematic, internal self-evaluation that in recent years has been instituted at a campus level at certain universities and is applied to all university departments, not solely to those associated with professional training. This type of evaluation relies heavily on faculty judgments. It is found, at those few places where it exists so far, predominantly at universities that emphasize graduate-level training and research.

The comments here about voluntary professional accreditation also pertain, to a degree, to the process of "program approval" that is a feature of the certification of new entrants to the teaching profession in a growing number of states. While the program-approval process is far from voluntary, it reflects some of the features associated with voluntary professional accreditation that are discussed in this paper. Thus the arguments advanced here may apply also to teacher certification

program review associated with program approval or accreditation conveys little public information about the overall quality of the effort. Dr. Joseph Cronin, Superintendent of Education for the State of Illinois, has suggested that accreditation is analagous to health department approval of a restaurant. It reassures a patron that he or she is unlikely to fall ill as a direct result of eating in the establishment, but there is no assurance of a tasty meal or even a nutritious one. Health department approval is not a Michelin Guide.

In reality, however, though the formal language of an accreditation report tends to be couched in terms of minimal standards and whether or not they are met, the exercise itself usually is attentive to questions of quality as perceived by the accrediting team and by the units being evaluated -- if only because the act of accreditation requires detailed self-examination. Thus during an accreditation visit, as well as before and after, there usually is serious analysis of program purpose, operation, and results. Institutional self-evaluation may or may not differ from accreditation in leading to public scrutiny of university programs beyond a minimal level. In the example to be described here, however, institutional self-evaluation has led to heated and sometimes well-publicized discussions of quality that extend far beyond minimum expectations.

I shall try to describe in some detail the attempt at institutional self-evaluation at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to illustrate some of the features that distinguish such a plan from evaluation for purposes of accreditation or program approval. In particular I will stress how such evaluation seems to affect professions with limited prestige -- like teaching, social work, and librarianship.

In late 1971, the central administration at the Urbana-Champaign Campus of the University of Illinois asked a blue-ribbon faculty committee to develop a set of recommendations that would lead to systematic evaluation of campus programs. The shrinking resource picture was the primary motivation. It was considered necessary to develop a plan that would be accepted by the faculty at large and that would serve as one basis for administrative actions to reallocate resources within the Campus. It was feared that the University would not be able to launch new and desired programs unless there was a reduction in dollar allocation to some of the existing efforts. In 1971, it did not seem likely that the University would be receiving appropriations increases from the Legislature in amounts necessary to start significant new activities. I quote from the letter establishing the Study Committee on Program Evaluation (SCOPE):

> The University appears to face an extended period in which innovation and change will be accomplished primarily through the rearrangement and reallocation of resources, rather than through growth and the addition of resources, as in the past . . . We hope that your recommendations will consider in detail several broad aspects of unit or program evaluation: The bases on which the evaluation should be made, the procedures to be followed in making the evaluation, the number of units or programs to be evaluated and their groupings, and the procedures which might be followed subsequent to evaluation . . . The bases on which evaluations are to be made may well differ widely from one unit or type of unit to another. To what degree can comparisons be made between units as disparate in function and purpose as [say] the College of Engineering

and the College of Fine and Applied Arts? How much should 'demand' factors -- enrollment demand, societal demand, etc. -- play a role in evaluation and the recommendations which follow from it? What guidelines can be established to tie overall institutional goals to evaluation and the subsequent decision making? To what degree can we (or should we) take into account such national evaluations as the latest ACE rating of graduate programs? What data can the Campus provide to the evaluation committees which will be most useful to them? Can we generate a specific set of data which would be relevant to the evaluation of all units and programs? Regarding the procedures to be followed, should our evaluations be undertaken by internal committees, outside consultants, or by some combination of the two? Could some evaluations be conducted completely by inside groups and others by external? Should students be involved in the evaluations, and in what role?

If weak programs, units, or groups of units are identified, it is quite possible that the recommendation would be to reduce their scope of activity or eliminate them completely; or, it may be that they are deemed so important to the Campus that the decision would be to upgrade them. It is also possible that a strong unit or program may be judged to have outlived its usefulness. In any of these possible instances, what procedures might be followed once the report of the evaluation team is received?

The Committee reported its recommendations in the spring of 1972. Almost all of them have been adopted and now are being followed. It was recommended that there be evaluations of every program on Campus on a cyclical basis. The Committee recommended that the evaluations be based, in part, on statements of the program's purpose and comparison of this purpose with institutional objectives. It also recommended that criteria and specific indicators be identified that would assess the degree to which the program achieves its purposes. (Some of the specific criteria and indicators that were proposed are listed in the attachment.) The Committee recommended that those faculty associated with a particular program under evaluation be given an opportunity to propose criteria and indicators that they believe reflect on program quality. The Committee also suggested procedures for collecting the indicators, applying the criteria to the program, and using the results for decision making. Further, it was recommended that programs of similar nature, involving related disciplines, be evaluated at the same time. To encourage candor, the Committee recommended that when a unit initiates and carries out an evaluation that leads to a release of some resources, a major share of these resources should be reallocated to that unit.

In addition to indicators about such factors as instructional and research quality, procedures were suggested to assess the value of the program to society, its uniqueness, and its potential. There also was a strong recommendation in the report that there be focus on costs and benefits by noting the number of students in the program, the number of staff, the number of degrees awarded, failure rates of students, the average length of time required to complete the program, and the amount of money utilized in the program. The Committee also made detailed and extensive suggestions about evaluation of non-academic programs.

Finally, and of critical note for purposes of this paper, the Committee recommended the establishment of a Council on Program Evaluation (COPE) to consist

of eleven members including one undergraduate student, one graduate student, and at least four faculty members who do not hold administrative appointments. The Council was to advise the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs about the development and operation of the Campus-wide system of program evaluation. The Council, of course, would be relatively unacquainted with the history and politics of any one academic area or profession.

After the recommendations were received, the Council (COPE) was duly established by the Chancellor's Office, in consultation with the Campus Senate. One of its early decisions was to constitute "task groups" consisting of seven to twelve faculty members, including at least three from inside the unit to be evaluated, to engage in the in-depth interviewing necessary to portray and assess each of more than a score of programs chosen for study in the first year of COPE's existence. Some of the first units to which task groups were assigned were the African Studies Center, the Anthropology Department, the Asian Studies Center, the English Department, the English as a Second Language unit, the French Department, the Geography Department, the Political Science Department, the Psychology Department, the Russian and East European Center, the Slavic Languages and Literature Center, the Sociology Department, and the College of Veterinary Medicine. Later, task groups were assigned to the Departments of Advertising, Journalism, Radio and Television, the Graduate School of Library Science, and the School of Social Work.

The task groups were asked to report back to the Council; it would be the Council itself that was to make recommendations to the Vice Chancellor based on the task group analyses. Task groups were asked to prepare three documents: (1) A Summary Report to be given to the evaluated unit (after consultation within the unit to provide appropriate detail) at the end of the interviewing period. (2) A more-complete Task Group Report which was to be forwarded to the Council. This report was to be considered as confidential and was to serve as the primary basis for action by the Council. Summary Reports were included in the Task Group Reports. (3) Action Reports which were to be summaries of the full report issued to the public.

The entire question of confidentiality has proved to be a critical one for COPE. Several recommendations that were considered confidential have appeared in the Campus newspaper. As a result, apprehensiveness in connection with the evaluations and resistance to them have been heightened. But, also as a result, COPE has come to be seen as serious, discriminating, and tough.

Three units were chosen for early task group study, in part, because they were scheduled for accreditation visits by their respective professional accrediting groups: the Library School, the Department of Architecture, and the College of Communications (which consisted, in part, of the Departments of Advertising, Journalism, and Radio/Television). An attempt was made to collect data for the accreditation visit and the COPE study simultaneously. It may be in the evaluation of these units that one can detect most readily some of the differences in outcome between institutional self-evaluation and professional accreditation.

Each of these units at the University of Illinois is considered within its respective profession to be among the top ten in the country -- indeed, by most accounts, one or two place among the top three. However this reputation did not prevent the COPE task group from raising serious questions about the quality of the programs. A few members of the Council, after studying the task group reports, even questioned whether two of these units should continue

to exist on Campus! In the opinion of certain COPE members, the unit(s) did not seem to be training their advanced students to undertake systematic programs of research or assume leadership for major reconceptualization of the profession. Yet, there was no question that within the professional field the unit was recognized as producing some of the best-trained people in the country, and the public result of the accreditation exercise was entirely favorable.

The difference in view between the COPE report and the final accreditation report is attributable, in part, to the fact that internal evaluation focusses upon the relationship between the unit's purposes and the purposes of the institution. COPE's frame of reference is the general Campus ethos and set of expectations. The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign sees itself as the preeminent publicly-supported graduate-level institution within the State. It sees itself as distinct from other State-supported institutions because of its emphasis on research and seminal scholarship. This claim is credible as one examines faculty publications, outside grants, leadership positions held by professors, etc., all over Campus. Training high quality librarians, or social workers, or teachers, or school administrators, or veterinarians -- or any other professionals -- is seen as important at Illinois, especially in view of the University's land grant traditions. But, in the view of professors serving on COPE, high-quality training is not necessarily deemed worthy of support. In the judgment of these professors (and personal judgments are key to COPE's operation just as they are central to the accreditation process), nothing substitutes for superiority of scholarship.

The accreditation teams visiting the University while the task groups were at work did not disagree with the finding that there was little emphasis on research in some of the units that focussed on professional training. However for purposes of accreditation, the unit easily met the minimum standards that had been established for the field.

On Campus, there is no question that the Council on Program Evaluation has had its impact. Administrators take its recommendations seriously. Task group study and recommendations led to major administrative reorganization of the College of Veterinary Medicine. The Council recommended the dissolution of the College of Communications, the elimination of one of its departments, and the reassignment to a different college of another. This particular recommendation has not been approved by the Campus Senate; yet, as might be imagined, it has had its effect. The fact that the Campus Senate has not approved the recommendation may in itself be revealing. The Senate is representative of the Campus at large. COPE is composed primarily of esteemed, research-oriented scholars who are appointed at large by the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs after consultation with the Senate. COPE reflects, in the minds of the Campus establishment, well-recognized and difficult-to-assail scholarly values.

One of the primary initial purposes of the COPE exercise seems to have receded in importance over the years: evaluation for purposes of resource allocation. There seems to be only loose coupling between budgetary decisions and the COPE process. One reason may be that administrators at Illinois feel confident about their own judgments of quality (and their own strength politically) and do not feel they need those judgments legitimated formally. Another reason may be the poor correspondence between the timing of COPE reviews and the budgetary cycle. Whatever the reason for the decline in importance of budgetary decisions in COPE's activities, the main result of COPE evaluation, I believe, has become

the reaffirmation of traditional scholarly values on the campus, especially in units that over the years have become more oriented toward professional service.

These days pressures close to home seem more influential than they were in the 60's. Whether or not there is an immediate budgetary consequence of a COPE evaluation, perhaps the question of prestige on campus has risen in importance relative to prestige in other quarters. Or perhaps the visibility of COPE has caused faculty to become more attentive to campus values. Whatever the reason -- budget, publicity, or administrative pressure -- campus expectations are being reasserted, slowly but successfully.

During the first years of COPE's existence, it became apparent that a tremendous amount of faculty time was involved in the task group activity. Further it seemed to be the case in some units that much of the benefit of the evaluation resulted from discussions that were stimulated within the unit being evaluated by the decision to launch the study. For that reason (and perhaps to shift some of the power back to departments) the Council embarked in 1975-76 on a major program of departmental self-evaluation. Detailed guidelines were developed by COPE, and each department undergoing a self-evaluation was expected to prepare a report that for the first time adhered to a prescribed form and reviewed a specified range of faculty and student activity. During 1975-76, about 25 departments were selected for self-evaluation with the new procedures. The self-evaluation reports were submitted to the Council to decide whether or not to constitute a task group to study any of the units further. Two units were identified for possible task group study by this process.

As COPE has matured, the instructions to the task groups have become both more sophisticated and more flexible. Task group members are invited to comment on their general impressions of the unit in such categories as its "accessibility", its intellectual climate and morale, and its cohesiveness -- as well as to report more specifically about departmental organization, faculty research and scholarship, visibility of faculty, teaching assignments, service activities, and continuing education. Data for both departmental self-evaluation and task group analysis are provided by central sources on campus when those data are available. The result of task group study is a complex mixture of detailed description plus colleaguial impressions and judgments (as is the case with accreditation teams).

Now what about the possible relationship between institutional self-evaluation and national voluntary professional accreditation, especially in the field of education? Voluntary professional accreditation in the field of education is in a tumultuous state. One prominent conflict focusses on the question of who controls entry into the profession. In the past, entry has been regulated primarily by teacher education institutions acting through state teacher certification boards. Now, teachers -- through their unions -- are gradually exercising greater control, and the National Education Association distinguishes between those members of the profession currently teaching in elementary and secondary schools and those serving in universities. Only those teachers currently in service in the elementary or secondary schools are designated by the state NEA affiliate to serve on such bodies. In some states, Oregon for example, "standards boards" -- legally-constituted certifying bodies -- have been established that are dominated by representatives of teachers

associations. NEA policy is to try to establish controlling boards like the one in Oregon all over the Nation.

The split between the higher education community and elementary/secondary school teachers reflects deeper and broader socio-political developments in the country. The coming years, as those of the recent past, may well be characterized by increasing fragmentation among the various special interest groups in the United States. People seem to be identifying with more specialized -- even parochial -- groups in their search for community. In such a climate, evaluation activities can be expected to be designed largely for special audiences and reflect different and even conflicting values. The goals of parents, teacher unions, university professors, and state legislators frequently are at odds with regard to schooling. NEA seems to want to limit the number of people trained in order to preserve its bargaining power. Professors appear to bend every effort to keep their enrollments high regardless of the demand for teachers. Legislatures and governors are concerned about high costs during a period of declining enrollments. Parents are concerned about school closings, bussing, and teacher strikes. It is difficult to detect even the base on which to build common hopes.

Additionally, there are few signs at present of consensus within the education profession about the characteristics of effective preparation programs. The sharp and growing political conflicts are amplified by conceptual disarray. Competency-based teacher education flowers at one institution, "humanistic" education at another. There is little agreement on "foundations" courses, or on appropriate field experiences in the early years, or on the level of technical training that is required to teach certain skills, or on much else.

Amidst this confusion, there is little reason to believe that the accreditation process will lead to assessment of quality beyond the attainment of minimum levels. Nor is there a compelling reason to think it should. On the other hand, the process can be used to affirm certain idiological positions (just as with institutional self-evaluation as illustrated by COPE). As the National Education Association has established greater control over the teacher certification process, and as it has become a more vocal force in the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), its leaders have stressed the importance of apprenticeship training. "Field-based programs" is the new slogan for NEA. It leads in the direction of striving to prepare teachers for the important proximate tasks that fill a school day, and it places greater weight on the role of the practitioner in preparing people for certification. More student teaching and other "field experiences" are advocated -- at the expense of campus-based courses. Also there is considerable emphasis on training for highly specified classroom skills. In the process, there appears to be diminishing priority accorded to the scholarly and intellectual bases of the profession, the very features usually associated with university efforts. Such program elements are seen as too "theoretical". Of course, one can be scholarly and "theoretical" and still base a program in the field, but one searches hard and with little success to find recognition of this fact in NEA's policy initiatives in the various state certification boards. There the emphasis is on changing state requirements to guarantee more preparation time in the schools, with little attention to the nature of the training to be located there.

It should be emphasized that the American Federation of Teacher leadership is pointedly at odds with NEA on many of these issues. It is NEA that has

placed "governance" among its highest priorities in order to control entry to the profession. It is NEA, in state after state, that is attempting to control the certification processes. It is NEA that holds a dominant voice within NCATE. AFT leadership seems much more interested in forging a "united profession" that would include both higher education and elementary/secondary schools. Control of certification and accreditation is of less importance to AFT, apparently, than improving conditions of service. Thus AFT represents a significant counterpoint to some of the trends and speculative comments advanced in this paper. And there are a few signs that the AFT position is causing NEA to shift some of its ground.)

Accreditation politics is characterized also in recent years by attempts to assure that preparation programs equip teachers with the skills necessary to meet current socio-educational problems in the schools -- working with bilingual youngsters, for example. Suggested revisions in NCATE standards stress repeatedly the need to emphasize multicultural settings. There is a tendency for teachers within accreditation organizations (as with other practical people) to identify critical, current problems, then stipulate that preparation programs must help students cope with those problems. Special interest groups rally around many of these issues. The question arises inevitably about the degree to which there must be explicit preparation for each of the major tasks a teacher or administrator faces. The problem is compounded by the fact that these tasks appear to shift in importance with regularity -- teaching of gifted in one period, about sexism in another, a stress on discipline in a third. Today it is "back to basics" and bilingualism.

The values held at universities, on the other hand, tend to build programs that strive to place such issues in broader political, historical, psychological, philosophical, and economic perspective. While every current teacher preparation program contains some courses on methods of dealing with particular problems and a strong student teaching component, attempts to teach professionals to cope with every immediate distress are usually seen in universities as short-sighted, even fadish. This viewpoint, as might be expected, is reflected in faculty-dominated, university self-evaluation programs where they have been established.

What are some of the possible consequences? What happens to a profession when the best training program in the nation, as determined by current practitioners, is deemed of insufficient quality to hold a respected place at a distinguished university? As has been indicated here, this state of affairs already has occurred in more than one field. What are some of the problems when the reverse is true: the program in a highly regarded department at an outstanding university is not accredited? Almost certainly, this will happen, too -- if it hasn't already; a given university may decide that it does not wish to place a large portion of its program in the "field" despite the requirements of an accrediting body or a certification board.

Problems such as these are likely to be exacerbated in the next decade as we think about library science, social work, teaching, and similar professions -- especially if the economy does not improve. If the pinch on resources is tight, it is unlikely that a major university will be deterred from stressing the values it has come to cherish: research, advanced graduate training, and high-order scholarship and reflectiveness among its faculty. In a time of expansion, considerable variation might be tolerated that is unacceptable during retrenchment.

Similarly the newly assertive forces behind some of the current moves to tighten accreditation and certification -- mainly the NEA and its affiliates -- seem in 1977 to be in no mood for compromise, especially since many fewer new entrants to teaching will be needed in the future than in the recent past, and "over production" is seen as a threat to teacher power. NEA believes it can write its own ticket for this arena of using teacher pressure to limit the number of newly certified teachers, and it might be correct. The question, in part, is whether the unions will strive to use their strength to limit involvement in teacher education by the research-oriented universities or by other segments of the higher education community. Current NEA policy and practice provides little evidence that teachers are considering this issue in their moves to reduce the role of higher education institutions in teacher preparations.

It takes little imagination to envision a situation in which prestigious institutions with strong, faculty-monitored evaluation programs may drop some forms of professional training. University-level preparation programs for teaching, for example, may then devolve to institutions with less background and commitment to research -- in fact to those colleges that were created in the 19th century specifically to train teachers: the former normal schools. It is more likely that those institutions with their traditional commitment to teacher education will hew to the standards established by various accrediting and certifying bodies if they depart from scholarly priorities than the research-oriented universities.

Institutional self-evaluation as manifested at Illinois may not be prototypical. However it is difficult to visualize any different outcome at institutions similar to Illinois -- especially if self-evaluation is largely in the hands of research-oriented faculty rather than university administrators. Whether or not systematic self-evaluation plans are implemented, virtually all universities are facing a period of financial stress, and difficult decisions are being made. Many of these decisions already have served to reduce the level of training in professions like social work, education, and librarianship It seems important to consider the possible effects of these reflections of university-level priorities within these professions forthrightly and carefully.

There are other possibilities, of course. Universities may tolerate programs that do not match major institutional goals, as they did during a period of expansion. This toleration may result from the power of special interest groups associated with the professions as that power is exercised through higher education coordinating boards, alumni, and, in the case of state-supported institutions, legislative bodies. Universities may decide that they "need" the students. Alternatively, professional accrediting and certifying bodies may begin to adopt some of the standards suggested by the major graduate-level institutions in the country as a method of limiting new entrants to teaching and other professions. In such a case, large numbers of institutions that do not share these values may be excluded from various professional training fields.

In the last analysis, the role of the major research universities in preparing people for professions like teaching and librarianship will be determined by the level of intellectual emphasis desired in these professions by those who control entry. In teaching, there are, so far, few signs that intellectual values are likely to be paramount.

ATTACHMENT

CRITERIA RECOMMENDED FOR INSTITUTIONAL SELF EVALUATION

1. The quality of instruction in individual courses and of the instructional program as a whole.

2. The quality of research, creative activity, scholarly work, service, and, if appropriate, of professional performance (as in the arts).

3. Centrality, i.e., the contribution or importance of the program to other programs on Campus.

4. The value of the program to society or its uniqueness in the State's program of higher education.

5. Potential and future expectations.

Possible Indicators of Quality of Instruction

1. Assessment by students of courses, teachers, and overall program.

2. Quality of program as viewed by recent graduates.

3. Standards for admission to and retention in programs.

4. Availability of adequate space and facilities.

5. Commitment to and concern for institutional programs as manifested in such elements as effectiveness of student advising, distribution of instructional load, responsiveness to changing program needs, etc.

Possible Indicators of Creative Activity or Professional Performance

1. ACE or similar ratings.

2. Ratings by professional societies and the results of the accreditation visits.

3. Outside grant and contract support compared to that for other programs in the field.

4. External recognition of staff members as reflected by Who's Who listings and similar honors, offices in professional societies, consulting, and publications.

Possible Indicators of "Centrality"

1. The relationship of the program to the institutional mission.

2. Instruction of students from other programs on Campus.

3. Contribution of programs to other activities on Campus.